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ABSTRACT

Putting the "reconceptualist approach" into its setting in curriculum theorizing raises fresh questions about its meaning in relation to other modes of curriculum theorizing. The human process of expanding awareness and concern underlies the call for reconceptualization. Discussion of "hidden curricula" and of reformist efforts such as open education have produced changes but have also been co-opted by the technological, scientific context in which the system remains. A second search, now taking place, tries to assess our condition by identifying the context which fosters estrangement and oppression but which is taken for granted in our thinking about schools. It is a context of estrangement between education and schooling, fact and value, mind and body, students and teachers. Reconceptualist discourse on curriculum is moving from the realm of the scientific toward the realm of the ethical and aesthetic. The reconceptualist's question of "How are alternative educational realities possible?" The answer lies in the world of lived experience and comes when one asks "What are my richest moments? From what process do they emerge?" The answer requires a third search through ourselves for a way to get beyong the limitations of our condition. (Author/JH)

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"Conceptualizing the Reconceptualists"

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My effort in this writing is to put what has come to be called the "reconceptualist approach" to curriculum theorizing in a setting that may help us to raise fresh questions about its meaning and to relate it to other modes of curriculum theorizing. I could do this by analyzing the history of curriculum theory from the classic NSSE Twenty-Sixth Yearbook on. But this is a history familiar to us. It has been dominated by a single mode of inquiry--namely, variations of the rationale associated with Ralph Tyler's name.

In the last several years, an increasing body of criticism of this approach has developed. One need only to cite Herbert Kliebard's criticism as an example. At the Xavier University Curriculum Theory Conference, in October 1974, Dwayne Huebner made a cogent point in his criticism not only of the final synthesis assumed to have been achieved in the NSSE Yearbook, but also of Tyler's work and that of his disciples. All such efforts, he asserted, tended to deny the genuine and very significant differences in value-laden "content" that must be recognized if one identifies the fields of knowledge, the needs of individuals, and the nature of society as the source material for guiding purposes.[1]

Or, I could cite the efforts of George Beauchamp, even in the new 1975 revision of his Curriculum Theory to continue to take the scientific stance. Others such as Mauritz Johnson, Elliott Eisner, and Decker Walker pursue similar ends. But this, too, would be ploughing over familiar ground for those of you interested in curriculum theory. Professor Walker has prepared a two part series of articles which will appear in the upcoming issues of Curriculum Theory Network, wherein he too will criticize the work of the NSSE Yearbook and respond with a set of prescriptions for the organization of the curriculum field as a whole, for the primary purpose of redefining the role of the scientific theorizers in the curriculum development process.[2]

Both of these historical approaches and the demonstration of yet a third--namely, the reconceptualist modes of theorizing have been aptly described and demonstrated, in part, in Pinar's Heightened Consciousness, Cultural Revolution, and Curriculum Theory, the 1974 publication of the University of Rochester's Curriculum Theory Conference, and the newly published (McCutchan 1975) volume edited by Pinar, Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists.

What Pinar and others have done is to extend James Macdonald's functional analysis of the kinds of theorizing he viewed as underway when he made his 1971 state of the field overview for the Journal of Educational Research. He noted three groups at work--the curriculum development theorizers, the scientific theorizers, and those who were engaged in theorizing as a creative undertaking with no immediate feeling of need to tie this effort to curriculum development or to prescribe solutions to practical curriculum problems.[3] It is essential to

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keep in mind that although certain individuals may operate within more than one arena, these groups are likely to retain their separate foci for the foreseeable future.

With this kind of a background statement behind me, I want to turn now to some questions that seem to me; (1) to launch us into an understanding of what some of the reconceptualists are doing, and (2) to give a picture of how one individual, myself, is going about his own efforts to generate theory.

What is really going on in our schools? What is really being taught? Who or what is teaching it? How is it being taught? How is it that this is what is being taught here? What do we mean now by teaching, and where is here? What is our situation? Do we want to change it? How?

Now, consider another set of questions.

Where are my-your richest moments? When is it as they occur? What is the nature of the process from which they emerge? Can it disclose secrets, imperfect but meaningful and reliable knowledge to be reconstituted as generic structure for spontaneous sculpturing?

Finally:

What (has been) is (will be) my curriculum?

How have we, do we, can we, will we--live with ourselves?

How have, do we, can we, will we--live together with each other? We begin the reconceptualization of the curriculum when questions such as these pose themselves for us.

While my primary purpose in posing these questions is to portray the human process of expanding awareness and concern which underlies the call for reconceptualization, I am convinced that action of both a practical and theoretical nature emerges from the crucible of each of these points of reference. That is, each question surpasses the one it precedes and can be viewed as one projectile of a frame of reference that has had, or will have, powerful consequences for the historical reality of schooling. For example....

I

What is going on in our schools? What is really being taught? Who or what is teaching it? How is it being taught?

These first four questions recall the "hidden curriculum," the attempt to articulate the relationship between the ostensible design of the schooling enterprise, and the apparent experience of those-in-school. Such understandings are made on two dimensions: political and "experiential."

The political concerns itself with calling attention to the values which schooling reinforce as a way of motivating parents and the enlightened public to take action to reclaim their schools. We have learned how some of the basic cleavages of our social structure: race, class, age, and later sex, manifest themselves in schools and how the school has functioned as a microcosm of the public world. As you may recall, we were asked to join the battle to open our classrooms as a way of cementing ourselves to the struggle for an open society,

and we were told that all we had to do was march down this street, or sit down in this building, and not only would it be ours, but, more importantly, we would naturally do things differently once we took control from the forces of authoritarianism, racism, sexism and capitalism. Calls for community control and alternative schooling represent attempts to respond to our first four questions in political terms.

The experiential focus directs our attention to the personal-psychological consequences of the schooling enterprise. Important differences arose between those who labeled the schooling process as out-and-out dehumanizing and maddening, and those who preferred to speak in measured tones and tedious paragraphs about the appalling state of our children's self concept. The message which managed to make its way through the jargon and hyperbole was that education, even in Post-Sputnick America, is and ought to be a process of growth. Furthermore, it became clear that teachers need to become aware of themselves and their students as persons.

The imperative of personhood together with the affirmation that we must reclaim the right to determine our own destinies was not without its tangible consequence. However, the signposts that were left behind are extremely difficult to identify now, as they have been repainted by "the barbarians." A casual glance at today's schools does reveal, by and large, more open space and greater flexibility of program. Even in older schools, the rows upon rows of desks securely fastened to the floor have been cut loose from their hinges. Looking a little harder discloses that the traditional model of the good teacher-our old friend the charismatic stand up comic-has been discredited. In effect we see that thoughtful suggestions were soon gobbled up by the behavioral scientists. Teachers, deprived of their positions of center stage in the trage-comedy of their classrooms have become classroom managers. Students, no longer considered as an audience to be entertained, are, more often than not, thought of as "workers" to be directed through a seemingly endless variety of stimuli that a new technology is busy generating. The banking process continues.[4] As history would have it, our earnest critics who cried out for personhood have managed, through no fault of their own, to awaken a long dormant compulsion for corporate style accountability and organization.

Our journey begins with the inevitable attempt to articulate what is wrong. The first step towards an active review of ones condition is often outrage. Anger is projected outward. One rails out against "the system" and in so doing declares that s/he is alive. The attempt is made to shatter the as yet unseen mirror. I am alive because I can see what is wrong.

If we look at the accomplishments of the 1960's as an example, we see how the actual, tangible environmental changes were more symbolic than real. Moreover, they were co-opted by people within the system who could easily grant many of the concrete proposals in a way totally consistent with their own strategies. Yet, paradoxically but most importantly, these historical phenomenon have developed in certain sensitive educators an expanded awareness. Such awareness serves as basic fuel for the movement towards reconceptualization.

II

How is it that this is what is being taught here?

Once we have convinced ourselves that we are alive, and not merely playing roles to fulfill our professional persona, we have begun to ask how the life we

witness has come to be what it is. This "second search" as I would label it, entails the work of understanding, explanation and evaluation, within the present historical context. Although distinctions can continue to be made between motifs that are self consciously and explicitly political, and those wherein the message for the others has to do with their personhood and not specifically their sociality, we would do well to avoid such distinctions, as the hemaneutical process embedded within the second search entails a more integrated consciousness of both public and private realities.

For example, Michael Apple, writing in 1970 about the "Hidden Curriculum and the Nature of Conflict" attempts to unravel the significance of the way conflict is managed in the schools. Although the "dialectic of social change" sustains our scholarship and our community life, it is surpressed.[5] Having made this identification, Professor Apple is not content to merely amplify the obvious, he gets beyond the need to cry out with passion "we are strangling our students!" Rather, he takes the identified phenomenon as something to be assigned a meaning. The resulting analysis functions simultaneously as an ethical identification, a revisionist interpretation, and an anthropological metaphor. The thrust of the work is an attempt to simply find a common sense way to understand, explain, and evaluate a given educational phenomenon within its historical context.

In broad social terms, we can cohere the cultural shift away from accusations and demonstrations towards consciousness raising groups of many sorts (although I am thinking here primarily of sex roles) as a difference in kind, a movement into the second stage of search. Identity is sought in contexts wherein the broadest possible consideration of the meaning of that identity is undertaken. Although prescriptive judgements are made (we live in a sexist society, we ought to pass a law protecting our right to live our new sexual identity, we should reorder our social relationships generally etc.) they are the byproduct of a much more profound search. It should be noted that the kind of judgements generated within the context of this search, although often implicit, are far more substantial than the earlier kind.

Failure to attain coherence and understanding of the kind explicated here can have serious personal and social consequences. Violence and or despair can all too easily emerge from the crucible of an unresolved search. If the level of search I have identified as stage I can lead to the assessment that our schools must be obliterated, the second search, left unresolved, can result in a perscription for far more generalized societal violence, or leave one securely implanted in a classic existential ambience of meaningless and depression.

Within our own discipline, the kind of understandings which emerge from the revisionist search are both sweeping and penetrating. We are compelled to accept that estrangement between education and schooling dominates the pedagogical environment, enstrangement between fact and value dominates the cognitive environment, estrangement between mind and body dominates the psychological environment, and estrangement between students and teachers dominates the social environment. It must be understood that this is the kind of ground upon which the increasing body of critical theorizing in curriculum stands. For the curriculum critic, the Tyleresque world is a world of estrangement and oppression, whose presence is so pervasive as to be taken for granted. The last thing the fish sees is the water, yet, for the fish, being-in water is a fundamental reality. Built into the patterns of thinking and valuing we take for granted are the blueprints for todays schools.

At this juncture, the achievement of the critical theorist has been to shift the grounding of much curriculum discourse from the realms of the technological

and the scientific, towards those of the ethical and aesthetic. The point of view that results from this shift leads one to reject the proposals of Schwab, Walker, and others, who focus upon the rational reorganization of the curriculum development process for the purpose of making it more accessible to the curriculum worker, and a concommittant effort to discipline our inquiry to meet the exigencies of the curriculum development structure.

Yet, it is obvious that the energy generated by this shift in focus has not been recycled back into the schooling process. Yes, the critics understand, but their understanding is their explanation. As such, we see clearly how what is most problematic about the schooling enterprise is bound up in what is most problematic about our society. But the prescriptions remained bound to "society" and "culture." As a discipline we have been accused of being ahistorical. Actually that is not quite fair. We have really been unihistorical. The belief is widespread that our discipline is moribund, and the critical theorists (and for that matter the futurologists as well) tell us, in effect, that the history we are passing on shares the same fate.

Presently revisionist work continues and promises to make increasingly important contributions to the development of ethical and aesthetic modes of inquiry. Equally important is its potential for providing for some a crucial transition; a movement beyond the need to make the basic identifications, towards a realization that is fundamental to a process of reconceptualization; in effect, I am a part of what is, of what is good and what is not. But I am getting ahead of our story.

In the interests of time, let me skip the rest of the first class of questions. Each of the others could be pursued in a similar manner.

III

> Where are my/your richest moments? When is it as they occur? From what process do they emerge?

As a group, the reconceptualists accept the revisionist critique on its own terms. On a meta-theoretic level, such a stance implies the rejection of what Elizabeth Maccia termed retroduction, the logical derivation of prescriptions from a systematic philosophy of education, with the application of a scientific systems metaphor to behavioral phenomenon.[6] In practical terms, the reconceptualist views such reformist efforts as Moral Education, Open Education, Death Education, or, for that matter, the formulations of such men as King and Brownell, or Bruner, as limited attempts to project a consciousness of an alternative educational reality. These attempts fail, primarily because they do not pierce the technological pattern within which they are conceived. Thus the reconceptualist question; how are alternative educational realities possible?

I see this shift in concern as fundamental. Yes, we live within the structures of a technological rationality, but for the reconceptualist these material boundaries are not to be taken as the source of our lived experience. The revisionist critique portrays all too well the consequences of such an orientation. We must respond, as educators and as persons, by reasserting the power of the human being, a human being whose source of life is life itself. We must confront the "energy crises" at its radical source, and explore the inner terrain.

William Pinar expressed it thusly:

"The curriculum theorist as designer is like a travel guide who plans the educational journey.

Objectives are formulated. Destinations include, let us say, London, Paris, etc. Let us also say this curriculum theorist is also a practitioner, and s/he will accompany me on this trip, calling my attention to the points of interest, instructing me in the history, sociology, psychology, etc. of London and Londoners.

The conditions are ideal. The traveler-student knows where s/he wishes to go, what s/he wishes to learn. The guide-theorist-practitioner has designed the trip, taking care of travel, housing and so on, so these aspects of the journey are handled aesthetically ethically, as well as efficiently. The trip goes pretty much according to plan, but not rigidly so; time is left open enough to pursue momentary interests; the guide and student-traveler develop an amicable, dialogical, perhaps even genuinely exploratory relationship. Afterward, both participants acclaim the trip as successful.

What is important about this journey, or any journey? Is that I saw London, Paris, that I answered my questions, that I learned much about the history, psychology etc. of where I visited? Does it even have to do with my relationship with the guide?

Its importance has to do with all this, of course, but it lies elsewhere as well. It has to do with what the following questions point to.

How does it feel to be uprooted from the geographical-social-psychological ambiance in which I live my day to day life? How do I experience the guide? What is my experience of London, of the Abbey, the tourists, the city's bustling sedateness? What is it like if one is Anglo Saxon in heritage, to find oneself among ones ancesters? What connections - psychological and cultural - exist between me and them? How do I experience their self assuredness, their haste, their courtesy? What is the experience of being a tourist, a stranger, in a land not ones own? What is my emotional life on this trip? Is it intimidating, exhilarating, revealing, obfuscating--what goes on? Perhaps the physical and social setting is sufficiently contrasting to the one I know in the United States that I can discern more clearly the nature of the relations between objective conditions, that is the public world, and inner conditions? How do I respond? What is the nature of that "I" which responds? What is the nature of my interest in a journey?

In short, the reconceptualists have begun to identify what might be termed a hidden hidden curriculum, the world of lived experience. The hidden curriculum exists as a purely analytical construct, a lever by which we raise ethical-political and aesthetic questions and stimulate change, while the hidden hidden curriculum serves both as an analytical construct, and a layer of reality that one can gain immediate access to. Revisionist questions can continue to be asked, as we will want to know how it is that this world has been stripped from view and what that discloses about the nature of the socio-political world. But first we must identify this "new world" and chart it. As such, this approach demands that curriculum become a knowledge producing discipline. At today's symposium you will witness attempts to project what might be called philosophical-psychological foundations for this new enterprise. We will need to draw upon such men as Husserl and Jung, acknowledging our debt to those who have come before us as we develop new modes of inquiry that are congruent with our new needs.

The search for meaning within our discipline leaves one increasingly vulnerable to social waves and storms. Estranged from the source of biography, from

lived experience, one floats on the surface until one realizes that there is no resolution to be found. We gaze at the schools but do not see ourselves looking. We see that material changes, whether it be textbooks or furniture, are but partial signals. More often than not they mask a more fundamental inertia. And yet, the same is true for us. What we see will not change if our point of view remains constant. We begin this, the third search, once we can find a way to personally, self consciously, and deliberately involve ourselves in our research strategy. Although knowledge sought is of and for the public world, it is at the same time, knowledge of the self. Having achieved an objective assessment of our condition (search II) we search through ourselves for a way to get beyond its limitations.

One begins by resonating within what is to be affirmed, regaining contact with the precious, rediscovering for oneself the nature of meaning. What is the nature of meaningfulness in this context? As we shape our response to this basic question, we begin to realize that the precious has its own historical constitution. The world within which it emerges does not seem to follow the laws of cause and effect, yet the energy that it summons up from deep within us may hold the key to our regeneration.

When I ask myself "where are my/your richest moments and when is it they occur?", I make no claim that the environments within which I have had my profound educational experience will be the ones you find instructive. Rather I do expect that making public the relationship between myself and those precious moments will be an educational act. You are not me, your dreams are not mine, but together we can rediscover how we are, in relationship with the subject matter of our lives. The relationship is one we all share by virtue of the human condition.

It should be noted that attempts, such as those made as recently as April 1974 by Professor Jonas Soltis at the AERA meeting in Chicago, to characterize reconceptualist work as traditionalist are incomplete. Although, in a manner of speaking, we have come full circle and returned to a concern for the relationship between subject and subject matter, our travels have taken us somewhere new indeed. For now we realize that we are the subject of our subject matter. That "subject matter" can no longer be fixed in time and space. The "subject matter," or "object matter," if you will, is the stuff of our experience, with all the ambiguity that that entails. It emerges as we encounter it, within and without the structures of our sociality.

The ice is broken. One takes the plunge armed with the knowledge that our task as theorists demands a wisdom above and beyond the skills of traditional scholarship. In contexts whose chief function is to re-arrange <u>adinfinitum</u> the same pieces of the same puzzle, we must discover pieces long forgotten, whose shadow brings us to a new vision, which we will call the reconceptualization of the curriculum.

Just below-
where the sun joins the mountain stream,
there's a clearing.

I want to sit by-
on the threshold of the waterfall.

As I begin the descent,
the rocks are numerous and jagged,
I feel free.

Up ahead are large boulders,
shining.

I hear myself say-
No; you cannot continue

In closing, then, I ask you to note that as the stages of search unfold, one develops an increasingly complex sense of "the problem." The problems of schools are the problems of society and the problems of society are the problems of persons; the mechanistic metaphors give way to the metaphors of ecology. This movement brings with it a profound sense of paradox. The complexity of the present challenge is that part of its solution demands the conversion of persons at the level of their mode of seeing, of knowing reality. Implicit within the revisionist critique, this realization constitutes the meaning of the term reconceptualization. Yet, it is blatently obvious that tyleresque social action strategies, useful as they may have been for fixing the machine, make no sense once the mechanistic consciousness has given way. I know this is hard to bear, but it is not to say that alternative realities are not possible, rather, we must learn to enter into its peculiar process.

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Notes

1) Dwayne Huebner. "The Thingness of Educational Content" Mimeographed paper presented at the October 1974 conference "Reconceptualizing Curriculum Theory," sponsored by the Graduate School, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio. As the paper develops, Professor Huebner extends his analysis beyond this level to the point of presenting the beginnings of an alternative rationale for curriculum development.

2) Decker Walker. "Straining to Lift Ourselves" in mimeo, 1974, copies available from the author

3) James B. Macdonald. "Curriculum Theory" The Journal of Educational Research Volume 64 Number 5 January 1971

4) See Paulo Freire. Pedagogue of the Oppressed (Herder and Herder 1970)

5) Michael Apple "The Hidden Curriculum and the Nature of Conflict" Interchange Volume 2, Number 4, 1971

6) James B. Macdonald was the first to make this point explicit. See his "An Example of Disciplined Curriculum Thinking" Theory into Practice Volume 6 Number 4, Oct. 1967 p. 169

7) from William Pinar. "Currere, Towards Reconceptualization" in Pinar ed. Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists (Berkeley, The McCutchan Publishing Corporation 1975)